

REMARKS

In view of the above amendment, applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

The Office Action and prior art relied upon have been carefully considered. In an effort to expedite the prosecution, the following remarks are provided to demonstrate the allowability of present claims 4-6 over the cited prior art.

Claims 4-6 have been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shimizu (JP 2001-059133) and further in view of Delaunay (US 6,761,779 B2).

The applicant agrees with the Examiner's analysis of Shimizu but disagrees with his analysis of Delaunay.

The subject matter claimed in claim 4 is different from Delaunay since the treatment time of oxidation is controlled by modifying the length of the band between the exit of the heating zone upstream of the furnace and the entrance of the galvanization furnace.

Delaunay neither shows nor suggests such a relationship for a steel band including added oxidizable elements allowing an improvement in the mechanical properties of the steel.

In effect, Delaunay seeks to limit oxidation of a product that could be a mild steel band (see column 5, line 2) thereby making it possible to decrease the length of a complementary heating zone in a reducing atmosphere used downstream of a preheating zone.

The atmosphere in which a product moves along in Delaunay is that of the preheating zones 2 and 3. This atmosphere is comprised of combustion gas products by the burners equipping these zones (see col 1, lines 49-52).

Further, in order to limit band oxidation, the burners are regulated with a combustion air level that will produce a reduction atmosphere (see col 5, lines 4-8). Thus, the atmosphere in which the product of Delaunay is moved along doesn't include air as in the case of the invention for the zone under consideration.

Delaunay isn't concerned with high resistance steel having hardeners such as Si, Mn, Cr, Mo, etc. Thus there is no corresponding concern to regulate the oxidation conditions for the steel band in order that the added elements are oxidized under the band surface before their migration toward the surface,

According to the invention as defined in claim 4, the object is not to limit oxidation as taught in Delaunay, but rather to produce at best oxidation of added elements under the surface of the band, before their migration to the surface, while adjusting the treatment time of air oxidation by controlling the length of the band between the exit of the heating zone and the entrance of the galvanization furnace.

Such a teaching is absent in Delaunay in which there is lighting or extinguishing of certain burners while remaining in an atmosphere of combustion gas this being quite different from the exposure in air according to the presently claimed invention.

In conclusion, Delaunay teaches oxidation limitation of a metallic band moving in a furnace in an atmosphere created by combustion gas from burners, while modifying the number of burners of the furnace put into service.

Such a teaching applied to Shimizu would not lead one of ordinary skill in the art to the solution of the invention wherein there is control of the treatment time of oxidation while modifying the length of the band exposed to air and **not to combustion gas**.

In view of the above, consideration and allowance are, therefore, respectfully solicited.

In the event the Examiner believes an interview might serve to advance the prosecution of this application in any way, the undersigned attorney is available at the telephone number noted below.

The Director is hereby authorized to charge any fees, or credit any overpayment, associated with this communication, including any extension fees, to CBLH Deposit Account No. 22-0185, under Order No. 21029-00272-US from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

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Respectfully submitted,

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